THE RELIGION OF THE ENGLISHMAN

H. F. B. MACKAY

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A SERIES OF SIX ADDRESSES DELIVERED AT ALL SAINTS', MARGARET STREET

BY THE

REV. H. F. B. MACKAY, M.A.
VICAR

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PREFACE

It will be obvious to any one who reads them that I did not mean to publish these sermons. But they were not addressed to the Sunday morning congregation at All Saints', Margaret Street; they were addressed through that congregation to a larger public, and it has therefore seemed best to accept the suggestion that they should be printed.

Laymen have often described to me the conversations about religion which flourish in the absence of a clergyman, and the thought occurred to me that I should like to throw a series of Sunday morning addresses into the form of a contribution to such a conversation. This conversation is prefaced in the two first addresses by some general remarks on the religious and moral condition of English society.

Complaints continue to reach me of the state of paganism in which little boys are sent to their public schools from professedly Christian homes. Last week a public school master told me that he can discover no knowledge among his boys as to the meaning of the sequence of the Church seasons, and that he had come across three lately who could tell him nothing at all about Judas Iscariot.

It is plain that very many English parents are failing to teach Christianity to their children. These addresses attempt to suggest some of the reasons.

H. F. B. MACKAY.

January 1911.

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I. HIS RELIGIOUS CONDITION

"The turning away of the simple."—PROVERBS i., part of 32nd verse.

ON six consecutive Sunday mornings, we are hoping to consider together the religious and moral needs of modern English society. We must begin with some survey of the situation, and our subject this morning is, "The Religious Condition of Modern English Society."

At the beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria, a dinner party in Cavendish Square was a gathering of people who professed to be governed by the Christian tradition. At the beginning of the reign of George V. that is no longer the case.

This does not mean that the world is ceasing to be interested in religion. The English world is much more interested in religion now than it was at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign. Then the Christian religion was to it what the British constitution was—the beneficent and unquestioned system under which it was so fortunate as to live. There were enthusiastic defenders and exponents of Christianity, as there were enthusiastic defenders and exponents of the British constitution; but that great majority of average persons which forms the bulk of every religion, the people who

obey it, not because it absorbs and delights them, but because they think it part of the order of the universe, like the sun and the tides—these people, eighty years ago, did not discuss their religion at all, or exercise their minds upon it. They had their children baptized, provided them with Bibles, taught them to fear God and hope for forgiveness through the merits of their Saviour, to go to church, and to refrain from work and play on Sundays, to honour the Queen, and to do nothing unworthy of an English gentleman.

Here was the Church, here were some of the elements of Catholic Christianity, but as the majority held it, this national selection from Catholic Christianity had come to be a kind of Christian Shinto, a tradition of ancestral piety dressed in Christian clothes.

Now it is this that is dying, this English Shinto, and it is dying because the world has again become interested in religion. It is the revival of interest in religion which has caused ten people out of our dinner party of sixteen in Cavendish Square to cease to represent any tradition at all. They belong to the mass who are only religious as far as they feel they must be. And owing to the endless discussions about religion, they have come to feel that no particular form of religion is so certainly true as to compel their attention.

Of the remaining six, one lady is a regular attendant at the Daily Eucharist at All Saints', Margaret Street. Her neighbour belongs to the Church Association, a society which exists for the purpose of suppressing All Saints', Margaret Street, and imprisoning its vicar. A third is a convert to the Roman Catholic Church, and the striking-looking man with the strong hands, who is listening with such admirable courtesy and patience while

she demonstrates the invalidity of Anglican Orders, is a great surgeon who is a frank and outspoken materialist. The man with the rather long hair is a noted spiritualist; and the lady who surveys everything from the woodcock to the Roman Catholic with a tender, pitying smile is a Christian Scientist.

Now our business this morning is, not with any of the six enthusiasts, but with the ten people who have lost the sense of certainty about their religion which constituted to them its sole importance, and who are consequently failing to implant in their children the seeds of any definite religious practice at all. It is not any result of the ceaseless discussions about religion which has upset them. It is the fact that there is any discussion at all. The plain man has no time or inclination to examine such things, and he turns to us to make his defence and explanation with a real sense of injury.

How in the world is he to know which is in the right: the enthusiastic lady who gets up every morning at six o'clock in the cold winter to go to service at All Saints', or the enthusiastic gentleman who wants to imprison the vicar for celebrating the service she finds when she gets there. As to the Bible, it is true that he does not read the *Contemporary*, or the *National*, or the *Nineteenth Century*, but he does read the lists of their contents every month on the table at his club, and every month some shrewd and clever fellow appears to be dealing a fresh blow at the poor old Bible. He has travelled about the world a bit and seen something of other religions, and he is bound to say they all seem to him very much alike. As long as a man acts up to what he believes, that's all that really matters. But as to God, he doesn't care a button what these scientific fellows say.

Of course there's a God. Why, look at his poor, dear old mother, the best woman that ever lived, God bless her; is it likely that anybody can make him believe that the God she believed in up to her last breath does not exist? No, sir. And at the time of her death he is not ashamed to say that he had—well, some sort of look into the thing himself.

His children? No, of course he does not teach religion to his children; it is not in his line at all, and his wife is so busy with her political work, her golf, and so on, that she can't, and it's not quite in her line either. But the boys are at an excellent preparatory school, where the headmaster is in deacon's orders, and they have a very nice chapel of their own where Morning Prayer is said, shortened on week-days and full on Sundays. The boys get a good Scripture lesson every day of their lives, and like it too. Why, last holidays one of them got badly hurt in a game they had invented out of their Scripture lessons—a game called Jael and Sisera.

But as to church—well, he goes in the country, because he must set an example. It is good for the servants to go to church, and they ought to see him there sometimes. He'd go oftener if it did him any good and if he ever heard a decent sermon. But, we must take his word for it, it positively does him harm to go to church. In the old days, when the old vicar was alive, he liked going. The old vicar had been a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. He was a thorough old gentleman, a scholar, a sportsman, and as good a Christian man as ever breathed. It was a treat to hear him read the service. Now they have a fellow who sings everything, though he cannot sing a note. The music is too dreadful for words. In the chancel, where his dear old mother used to sit, there

are now two rows of boys out of the village school, who wriggle all through the service, and whose voices are frightful. In the old days there were some women with quite decent voices who sang. This parson thinks it is wrong for women to sing in church. The parson is a good man, a hard worker, but somehow he cannot get on with him. He does not know what to talk to him about. And he is always upsetting the people. For example: look at the Harvest Festival. In his father's time there had always been a Harvest Home; to be sure, they did not go to church, but they always rang the bells. Well, now there is a service. He does not mind that; he thinks it is perfectly right, and the church is always packed. But last time the vicar covered the communion-table with lighted candles, he had got every candlestick out of the vicarage, and he had what he called a procession, and actually he, the squire, and all the rest, were kept standing up, while the boys out of the village school went rolling round the church.

And as to the sermons, they are always about the Church. He is always being told to obey the Church. What Church? There is nothing about obeying the Church in the Prayer Book; in fact, the boot is on the other leg in England; it is the Church which has to obey the State, and a very good thing too. In Lent he was told the Church expected him to fast; and before Easter the parson actually had the impudence to say from the village pulpit that the Church exhorted every one who found himself unfit for communion because of his sins to repent and go to confession that he might get absolution. Again he begs to ask, what Church? Certainly not the Established Church of England. He hopes he knows his Prayer Book. His poor, dear mother

gave him a Prayer Book when he was six, and he has kept it ever since, and there is not one word in that book about fasting or going to confession.

No! he goes to church sometimes for the sake of example, but a walk round the home farm does him a great deal more good, body and soul. He tries to be a good master, a good husband, and a good father; and if he ever has to give an account of his life to a Higher Power he will be able to say at least that much for himself, and it is a good deal more than many other people will be able to say who call themselves religious.

You observe that the squire is quite genuine, and that if he has many imaginary grievances he also has some very real ones.

Well now, out of that home—kindly, hearty, happy—where religion is represented by the village church, which the boy finds a bore and the father a source of irritation, the modern boy goes to his public school. He finds a world of much good and much evil, and he gets some sense of corporate religion. The school chapel does thrill him sometimes; the village church never thrilled him. He gets some sense of the long continuity of the Church of England. He is impressed by the fact than an Englishman ought to belong to it, and not to a dissenting body or the Roman Catholics.

If the boy is at an ancient school like Eton or Winchester, the solemn beauty of the place really affects him; is, indeed, perhaps, the first really Divine influence in his life. And he hears good sermons. His headmaster gets down some of the first preachers of the day. They all preach sermons specially suitable to boys, and the boys hear their favourite virtues enlarged on Sunday after Sunday with a variety of eloquence which is very impressive.

Soon comes his confirmation. His housemaster, a fine layman, who has earnestly considered the question of taking orders, and decided that his conscience will not allow him to make the necessary declarations, prepares him. The preparation makes a real moral appeal to the boy. He does not know why. Something sacred and solemn is coming to him ; to have the hands of the bishop laid publicly on his head is a serious matter. No gentleman can face it lightly. It will be the passport to Holy Communion. Here, some knightly image of the Holy Grail rises before him, and he thinks of his own poor meannesses and secret impurities, about which nobody has spoken to him privately, and he shivers. It is extraordinarily pathetic that the best thing in the life of an English boy who is brought up as a moderate Anglican is that on the brink of the Holy Communion he hesitates and shivers. He does not understand exactly what the Holy Communion is. He only knows that it is not what the Roman Catholics say it is. Nevertheless, he knows that only clean hands should take that Bread and hold that Cup, and he is very humble and uncomfortable about it. But he gets this out of contact with the fine character of his housemaster, not out of anything the housemaster has said ; the veiled and carefully moderate language of the instructions has never bitten at all, and the whole impression passes away.

But he comes up to Oxford or Cambridge, charming, reverent, and with a very real religious sense. Then what is amiss ; simply this, he is completely ignorant of the Christian faith. The message with which St. Paul transformed the world has all his life been sung to him in anthems, read to him from the Bible, enshrined in the prayers he has been given to say ; but as boy,

youth, and man, he has never heard it so that he could grasp it, love it, and glory in it. He has been preached at to repletion, and starved to death for the lack of catechetical instruction in the Catholic faith, and the demonstration of it in practice before his eyes in the Church.

And then our reverent young man, with his historical sense nicely developed, but without the Catholic faith, meets the girl who is to be his wife. She should come to him a daughter of Mary, with all the wonder of the Incarnation in her eyes and in her mien. She comes to him clever, keen, hard, shrewd. Mary means no more to her than Artemis. Her hard brilliance cows the man who loves her. He is ignorant of Christianity. She goes further; she despises all religion—she has never lived at Eton or at Magdalen. She soon laughs him out of all his wistfulnesses. She is a capital companion, she fishes and shoots and plays golf. She smokes and plays bridge. Life in such companionship will surely never have a dull moment. And so the young couple of to-day go off from the marriage feast to create the home of to-morrow, to live a creedless life in a childless home.

A childless home! That brings us to next Sunday's subject: the moral condition of modern English society.

A last word. You say that such a generalisation is extremely unfair. No; I deny it. English society contains its thousands of splendid Catholics, English and Roman, thousands of devout evangelical Christians, hundreds of families, some of them the greatest in the land, always the slowest to change their traditions, which maintain the sober Protestant morality and discipline so nobly exemplified by Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort; but I am quite sure I have fairly outlined the

tendency of the majority. I do not blame the majority. I do not even altogether blame the Church of England. The thing which has happened was inevitable. The majority are where they always are in a period of change. They are in doubt, in suspense; they would not be religious if they could help it, and now the thing seems to them to have become uncertain again; and so long as it all seems to lie in the lap of the gods their power of action will remain paralysed.

I hope that those who are here to-day will come with me through these six Sunday mornings. And meanwhile I ask you, every one in church, to say a real prayer every day this week. We must begin to do something for our friends who do not see the vision of Christ as we do. Will you between this and next Sunday—everybody here—say with your evening prayers the collect for Advent Sunday with the intention that God may help us to help our brethren towards the vision of peace which is the Heavenly Jerusalem?

II. HIS MORAL CONDITION

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity."—ECCLESIASTES xii. 8.

WE were thinking last Sunday about the religious condition of English society; this morning we are going to think about its moral condition.

Moral ideas change more slowly than religious ideas. We are not so far from the morality of seventy years ago as we are from its religion. The morality of the squire whose profession of faith we listened to last Sunday morning does not differ greatly from that of his old mother.

The difference is that she knew what she based her morality on, and he does not know what he bases his morality on. She based hers on her intense belief in God and His Word. The squire holds on to his belief in God with some difficulty, but still regards as sacred the morality which flows from that belief. Having lost the connection between his morality and its origin, the squire does not see that Christian morality is an interdependent theory of life, and that to pull big stones out of its foundation will bring the whole building tumbling about our ears.

For example, he does not in the least see that the sanctity of marriage lies in its being indissoluble. He tells me that if Mrs. X leaves her husband and throws in her lot with Mr. Z, it is sheer bigotry in me to refuse Mr. X, who is a member of the English Church, the relief of a divorce and the solace of another wife,

and he continues to cut Mr. Z at his club until the case in the courts is over and he has married Mr. X's wife. But as soon as Mr. Z has made what the squire calls "an honest woman" of her, the squire holds out a rather stiff hand to him and readmits him to his acquaintance.

If, in my conversation with the squire, I tell him I have not the slightest objection to an unbaptized pagan taking advantage of any arrangement as to a change of wives which the State may allow him, but that I intend to refuse communion to any member of the Church who does so, the squire thinks me immoral, bigoted, and lawless. "The thing, sir," he says, "is either right or wrong. The State allows it. You are an official of the Established Church, and you have no business to censure anybody who keeps within the law."

The only result of our conversation is that the squire privately decides that I shall not prepare his daughter for confirmation.

He has lost, you see, the conception of Christian marriage as a contract between two persons, who, since their baptism, have been living in a supernatural state, the laws of which bind them.

This simple and sincere English gentleman has come to regard marriage as a Roman gentleman regarded it in the time of Tiberius, as a natural contract regulated by the State—purely natural, so that when nature rebels against the tie and desires to form another, the State must put no strong impediment in the way, and must ultimately sanction the new arrangement.

With this view of marriage comes the corollary that the ties of affinity are no ties at all; that a man's wife's sister is not his sister, but merely somebody else's sister

whom he can marry if he likes on the death of his wife.

But the squire has one great bother and perplexity: he cannot understand why he has so few grandchildren. His three healthy sons and his three healthy daughters-in-law have given him only two grandsons and one granddaughter. He remembers the cohort of uncles and aunts, and the cohorts of cousins, who in his childish days filled the old manor-house with life and laughter in the summer and at Christmas. He thinks of the helter-skelter of boys who followed him through the stables on the first blessed morning of the Christmas holidays. The smell of a frosty morning in the stable-yard will, even now, bring upon him a rush of feeling which dims his eyes and tightens his throat. He remembers the pure joy of meeting his great friend, the old coachman, and his best pal among the stable boys. Surely, among men nowadays, there is something less of intimacy with God's good earth and with simple things!

So the squire ruminates, and then he looks at the two rather *blase*-looking little boys in the very well-cut clothes, who are talking to the chauffeur on the steps before the hall door—the chauffeur, that well-set-up, rather sinister-looking young gentleman, who has taken the place of the old coachman. And the squire's face grows troubled, and his jaw falls.

Why are there only these two grandsons? Simply because his sons aud his daughters-in-law have no controlling theory of life at all. They have never heard that there is a Christian law which governs the married state and regulates the procreation of children. Their life is spent in avoiding inconveniences and unpleasant

sensations, and in pursuing amusement and pleasant feeling. It is an intensely restless life, and the young couples wish to be as unhampered as possible. They want the season, and Cowes and Scotland, and their round of visits, and Monte Carlo, and the season again —and they don't want children. One or other, or both, dislike the idea. There is a dread, too, of pain and danger for the young wife. There is, in fact, a growing repugnance to the thought of fatherhood and motherhood.

A suggestion that they should speak to a Christian priest on the subject at the time of their marriage they would have derided with contempt. Perhaps they have consulted a physician, and it is quite possible he has given them the advice they would have been given in Rome in the days of Tiberius.

Now, in all this we are in the grip of natural forces, which are stronger than ourselves. A thing has happened which always happens in the declining days of any era of civilisation. The race is becoming too refined for the process of reproduction ; and this always shows itself first in the class which ought to give to the community its best children. Only one thing can carry the race through such a period. It is a fixed, unalterable standard of thought and feeling on the point. That is what the Catholic religion provides.

But out of the sixteen people at the dinner party which we were considering last Sunday, only two know anything about the Catholic religion—the worshipper at the early Eucharist at All Saints', Margaret Street, and the combative convert to the Roman Catholic Church.

Let us clear up our minds on this subject. That

wretched little Portuguese republic has produced divorce proposals which are intended to show the way towards the emancipated relationships of the future. If it brings them into being, it will find the need of another law—a law of compulsory breeding. If men are, after all, only animals, but animals which have the astounding power of avoiding the responsibilities of parentage, then it will be necessary to preserve and improve the breed like that of any other cattle.

Now it is these young people who are giving the tone to modern society. They have no great virtues, and they have no great vices. They neither defy God nor believe in Him. They do not hate the Christian religion. It simply does not interest them at all. They help to form a restless, good-natured society, eager for distractions. It is a society of children too busy with its devices and amusements to think. Hence its horizon is steadily contracting. It has no sense of there being vast issues involved in life. It is singularly free from violence. Nobody quarrels over public matters, nobody quarrels in public, because nowadays nothing seems worth quarrelling about. If a husband and wife change partners, no blood is shed to-day, no blow is struck, but hostesses are still careful that the newly-shuffled couples shall not be brought face to face in the same country house. Nothing that can upset the cheery practical-joking existence of the great body of good-natured people, who call one another by pet names, is permitted. And there is very little drunkenness.

Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, and their contemporaries, drank so much, that we, their descendants, have been deprived of the capacity of drinking at all. Most people in society are as free from excess as we are in

this church, and we are all sober for the same reason—because if we took to excessive drinking we should be dead in a month. In Mr. Pitt's and Mr. Fox's days people drank deep and went on. Now if a man drinks deep he falls out. Why, most of us modern men cannot even drink coffee after dinner.

But while there is very little desire now for excess, there is an increasing recourse to stimulants and drugs to enable men and women to endure the rush of life. We are all like actors, tired and weary of our parts, and we are tempted to take stimulants that we may do ourselves justice in the next act of the play.

The rush of life! That is the worst evil of the present day.

The idols of the present day are not luxury and beauty. They are convenience and speed, and both are acting injuriously on human nature. We have almost lost the discipline of enduring little discomforts, and of waiting for what we want. With electricity for our magician, we can conjure up speed, light, warmth, and knowledge as we will. Modern conveniences are softening us all. They deprive us of half the daily discipline which used to teach men endurance and patience.

And with the nerves of this soft age its speed is doing the work of the devil. Men and women are being shot half conscious through a world of dissolving views, gathering their knowledge from the headlines of the newspapers.

So habituated are we to noise and jar, that we cannot tolerate stillness and repose, and our amusements become more and more violent. Conceive the amazement of

the people who dance through Watteau's pictures if they could see their successors on the switchback and on the wigglewoggle.

And there are signs that a jaded age is in search of more debased sensations still. There is a marked increase in certain forms of vice, vice which is also crime, and that among the educated classes. Shops of a cynical shamelessness now flaunt themselves in the main thoroughfares untouched by the law. The education of the masses has borne evil fruit in a crop of gutter journals, which cater for the lowest tastes, and in an epidemic of cheap, impure literature, which we have now seen for some time on the bookstalls, and against which, so far, we have made no effective protest.

But this is not a wicked age; it is a careless and a thoughtless age; careless of principle, unconcerned with great issues, and besotted with delight at its own petty inventiveness.

"Society," wrote a contributor to the women's supplement of the *Times* of November 12, "is engaged in a fatal game. But we can still alter its course if we set to work steadfastly to change a life of artificial pleasure, unhealthy excitements, vain pursuits, ignored responsibilities, into a life of healthy purposes, keen physical and intellectual enjoyments, and responsible undertakings where duty reigns."

That appeal meets with a rejoinder in yesterday's issue from an inquirer who, in sarcastic tones, asks for the details of the remedy, and condemns the appeal as "a generalisation in terms of cant."

I will give the inquirer the details of the remedy. It is a short prescription, but it goes far. The remedy is God. God! English society has ceased to hold any

worthy or even credible conception of God, and it has consequently got a wrong notion of the relative importance of things. There let us stop to-day. Our subject next Sunday will be the failure of the modern English conception of God.

III. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS GOD

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."
—APOSTLES' CREED.

WE are thinking of the religious and moral state of English society. We have seen that it has ceased to be governed by any strong religious tradition, and that it is too much distracted by the pressure of temporal interests to give itself to serious reflection on the matter.

Against this prevailing tendency two bodies of opinion would desire to make protest—an older and a younger. There remains, and I should suppose it was magnificently represented among the great aristocratic families, a large body of men and women which is animated by the very highest sense of public and private duty. Both our great hereditary landowners and our chief politicians compare well with those of other European countries, but it cannot be said, either in the matter of religion or morals, that this important group is capable of giving the country a clear lead. Its English Catholics, its Roman Catholics, its Evangelicals are not strong enough numerically to impress the country; and the rest have no effective religion at all, and are consequently uncertain as to the basis and the inferences of their traditional morality.

The hope of the moment lies in a group of the younger people, which is hardly as yet conscious of itself. Several kindly but rather impatient correspon-

dents have written to remind me of the existence of this group. I am not likely to forget it, because the four Advent Sunday morning sermons are to be addressed to it.

There is, then, in English society to-day a strong leaven of noble young men and women who feel the need of a religion, of noble young husbands and wives who see the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian home, and wish to bring up their children Christianly.

After my first sermon one of my brother priests said to me, "Your sermon had this bad flaw in it: in order to get the effect that you wanted at the end, you were obliged to marry the best young man to the worst young woman."

Well, I am impenitent. That contemptuous young woman dominates the social scene; why, we are always trying to give courage to gentle Christian ladies who wince and shrink under the tyranny of her hard eyes, her hard laugh, her keen speeches, her contemptuous silences.

Yet, for all her insolence, that young woman has her black moments, and is an arrant coward at heart, and the young men and women who are the hope of the moment could break her down and change her life if they only knew how to begin.

On these four Advent Sunday mornings I am going to suggest to them a line of thought and action.

At present they identify religion with a very much detached sort of subscription to Anglicanism, by which I mean the theory which takes these two little Provinces of Canterbury and York, with their peculiar method of performing the rites and ceremonies of the Church,

and sets them in the centre of the Christian picture as the central and final authority in matters religious for the English people. They associate Anglicanism with cathedral services and the leisured society of the cathedral close, and they are conscious that the whole thing bores them.

Further, they assume that religion must be taught through the medium of Bible stories; and when, animated by a high sense of duty but with no enthusiastic conviction, they begin to teach their children Bible stories, they are disconcerted to find that their children are as much bored as they are.

Jesus of Nazareth suggested to His followers that they should regard nice children as experts in true religion; and if religion bores nice children when it is conscientiously provided for them like German and like Swedish drill, let us be quite sure there is something wrong in the method of presentation.

What is wrong with these conscientious attempts of the young father and mother? Simply this, they are not communicating religion to their children from themselves. Religion is a life. A child can only take it in as it takes in the other constituents of its life, the sun and the air, and the bread and butter, when like these it is in the atmosphere and in the inevitable routine of its home.

Now if religion is not sun and air, and bread and butter to the father and mother, it will not be to the child. And it is only sun and air, and bread and butter to the father and mother, when they have a personal experience of God. A personal experience of God. That is where our good young couple must begin.

God! Let us follow the young husband into the only room in the house where God is ever discussed—the

smoking-room. The smoking-room is pervaded, as some one has lately said, by a notion of Catholicity which helps it to treat all definite doctrine as provincial. It does not talk if a priest is present, and the ecclesiastically minded layman is a very nervous defender of the faith. Hence the smoking-room notion of religion is usually about as clear as its atmosphere. I think we can help the good young couple by trying to clear up the smoking-room mind.

The first great division we must make is between the men who accept the materialistic interpretation of the universe, and the men who accept the spiritual interpretation of the universe. Let us get those two camps quite clear; and then let us beg from the materialist no more bombast, for your seriously purposed materialist talks more cant than any man in the world.

If unconscious energy and atoms account for everything, then virtue and vice are physical products like sugar and vitriol, and ethical science, which regulates those products, is chemistry.

Well, if so, then let us beg that this department of chemistry may be taught in the plain, simple language in which other departments are taught, and that materialists will cease to glow over it in words borrowed from supernatural religion.

Secondly, let us observe that everybody in the smoking-room who is not a materialist either believes in the spiritual interpretation of the universe, or thinks it a possible alternative—the theory, that is to say, that behind the universe of physical phenomena there reigns Eternal Spirit who has brought it into being, and for whose service it exists.

Now, may we not ask of the man who believes this

what we have asked of the materialist, that he will speak and act as befits this conception, and not speak and act as though he did not believe it?

And so, I make my first appeal to the noble young father: "Sir," I say, "let me beg you to consider how tremendous, how all-controlling, is the thought of God—that little word of three letters by which we glibly name the Spiritual Unity, which is the Eternal, the Infinite, the Supreme. If He exists, He is not merely endlessly bigger than you and I, as you used to think when you were a child. Big and little have no relation to Him, He is everywhere, endlessly, completely present. And He is not human, as you used to think when you were a child—not a gigantic, invisible man, sometimes kind and sometimes unkind, sometimes attentive and sometimes inattentive. 'I find it so difficult to believe that God hears my prayers,' you have said to me, as if God were somewhere or other in space, and prayer an invisible telephone, by means of which you tried to reach Him. If this Eternal, Infinite, Supreme Spiritual Unity exists, He interpenetrates you and me as the ether, and at every point within and without us He is completely present.

"No, God is not human; but if we can recognise Him and take up an attitude towards Him, then you and I are certainly Godlike, and so can describe Him to ourselves in terms of the faculties which we have in common, provided that we are careful to remember the great saying: 'What is understood, or felt, or thought about God is as nothing to what cannot be understood, or felt, or thought about Him!'

"Now the religious experience you desire is a conscious personal intercourse between your spirit and the

Spirit of God. 'Yes,' you reply; 'but I do not believe in the thing strongly enough to get it. This is what I wish to believe, but I don't quite believe it. Although I reject materialism when it is put before me as a theory, I don't see my way clearly to act upon the other.'"

Now my answer is this. "You will never see your way until you begin to act. *Solvitur ambulando.* If you would verify your supposition that God exists, you must make a great venture on the basis of that supposition. You must seek to know God as you seek to know another human spirit, and your search must be worthy of the nobility of your quest."

"We are speaking very confidentially. I want an illustration of my point. Sir, you have made a perfect marriage. Tell me, how did you win your wife?"

"Well, we first met in a country house at a dance. I don't think, and I didn't think then, that she was the prettiest girl in the room, but at once I knew—how well I remember the moment!—that she was meant for me."

"And, then?"

"Well, then, I took a lot of trouble about it, of course. I got myself a lot of invitations to play cricket down there the next summer, and when I got down I tried to see her all I could. I went to all the garden parties."

"You are very fond of garden parties?"

"No, I hate garden parties; they bore me to death; but you see—well, I hoped she would be there."

"And was she always there?"

"No, not always. And when she was I only got a word with her, but it was quite worth while."

"In the end you were successful?"

"Yes; it was very strange. She had always thought of me as I had thought of her. I hadn't imagined such happiness was possible. It didn't make me proud, it made me humble. I was so utterly unworthy. But it cured me of some things. For example, I lost—it was a wonderful thing—I lost all my temptations to sins of the flesh."

"After that everything went smoothly?"

"No, indeed it didn't. I had very little money, and there was great opposition. I was not allowed to see her or write to her for a long time. But we had each other, nobody could alter that, and it made all the silence and separation bearable."

"How did it come right?"

"Through that blessed Boer War. I volunteered, you remember, and had great luck. I got my commission—and one or two other things; they were much too civil to me in despatches. Then her people caved in. I lost my arm, of course, and she got a streak or two of grey in her hair. But we are married—thank God."

"Listen. There are numbers of people all round you, people whom you often meet, to whom God is infinitely more than your wife is to you, and who found God and won Him just in the same way. There is no other way. It is a splendid and an arduous quest, and you, sir, have never embarked upon that quest at all. You and your wife want to stand out against the prevailing tendency. You want to be religious. You want to teach religion to your children. Well, here you must begin, in the pursuit of God. For your failure runs right back into this, into an utterly unworthy and impoverished conception of God.

You have never improved upon your childish thought of Him. The rest of your early mental outfit you have outgrown and replaced. You have outgrown this, but you have never replaced it. No teaching or preaching about the being of God has ever got through to you. What relation do the prayers and acts of self-sacrifice—by which you have tried to know God—bear to the gallant adventure in which you won your wife?

"Have you ever gone away and spent some days in trying to put yourself into vital union with God? Have you ever locked yourself up in your room for half-an-hour and pulled yourself together into a bodily, mental, and moral attitude of strong attention, and tried to concentrate the whole of yourself upon Him?

"Man! have you never learned that the pursuit of God is the divine adventure! And yet times out of number you have held the psalter in your hands, and you must have some sort of glimmer as to the lives of the saints. You must begin; and you must begin by doing what you really do not do—you must begin by practising religion."

And now the young husband and his friends in the smoking-room find their voices, and all the difficulties about the practice of religion are hurled pell-mell at my feet out of a sort of lucky bag—the efficacy of intercessory prayer, the definitions of the Athanasian creed, the Creation stories of Genesis, the miracles of the Old Testament, the mistakes in the Bible, eternal punishment, the variety of religions, the failures of Christians, the divisions in the Church.

"Gentlemen, let all these things lie on the ground for a moment and listen. Religion is a commerce between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. How do we

human spirits commune with one another? We have devised a code of material signs which we call language. Now there is in the world a great code of signs by which the Spirit of God and the spirit of man have commerce. We call this code external religion.

"External religion is essential to the practice of religion, but it is not religion. External religion is the code. Religion is the use which God and man make of the code.

"Now, it is that particular code called Christianity that you are in some difficulty about. You have got a little uncertain about it. You cannot use it or teach it with enthusiasm. You are always saying, 'I am not an irreligious man, but'—but—something or other, which always means, 'I do not understand parts of the code. I do not like parts of the code. I have detected mistakes in parts of the code.'

"And yet you want God. Well, let us lock up the code and all its difficulties for a fortnight: until Sunday week, let us lock up in a cupboard the Catholic religion by which the saints talk and walk with God, and I will keep the key.

"Meanwhile, we will consider together next Sunday one object, and only one. Here it is." And now in the middle of the smoking-room there stands a figure—a man. He is about thirty. He wears an un-English dress of flowing outline. He is worn and pale; but he is serene and strong. What is he carrying? He is carrying a bundle of carpenter's tools. In an instant every chair in the smoking-room is vacant. Cigars and cigarettes are thrown into the fire. The men are standing massed together on the hearthrug, white and tense and breathless, and in the awful silence you can hear the

clock tick. The man does not speak; he does not even look at anybody in the room. With a strange majesty he waits. We will consider him and question him next Sunday. He bears a name very common in his time and country—Jesus.

IV. ATTITUDE TOWARDS JESUS CHRIST

"And in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father, from thence He shall come to judge both the quick and the dead."—APOSTLES' CREED.

WE are considering the religious and moral condition of English society; you remember the point at which we left the subject last Sunday.

We had turned with thankfulness and hope to that group of younger men and women who feel the need of a religion, who appreciate the results of Christianity as they have seen them in noble lives, and who wish to bring their children up as Christians. We had reminded the young husband that the quest of a religion is the quest of God, a quest which is as arduous as it is noble. We had reminded him that, like all other quests, it must begin by an act of faith, by acting, that is to say, on the supposition that the object of the quest exists. We reminded him, in a word, that his quest must begin with the obedient practice of religion.

And the young husband and his friends had rejoined by enumerating difficulties connected with the history and literature of Christianity which were hindering them from the obedient practice of religion.

In reply I asked them to allow me to lock up these difficulties until next Sunday, and meanwhile to contemplate a single figure, and I introduced our Lord into the smoking-room.

It proved a most uncomfortable social situation. The gentlemen who had been pelting me with difficulties from the depths of their arm-chairs sprang to their feet, hurled their cigars into the fire, and stood on the hearth-rug, quite rigid, with their mouths open. They are standing there still. *They do not know what on earth to do.* Now, that attitude is the subject of this morning's sermon.

Young men and women in English society to-day, even the well-intentioned ones, do not know what to think about Jesus Christ, and this is why they cannot set out upon the pursuit of God. Before setting out upon the divine adventure, it is not at all necessary to have defined one's relation to Balaam's ass or Jonah's whale, but it is necessary to have defined one's attitude to Jesus of Nazareth. One must either take His path or another, and Jesus so completely dominates the European situation, that it is impossible to try another path until one has cleared Him out of the way.

Who and what is Jesus? The answer to that question runs right back into the beginnings of human history. The pursuit of God is beset by an enormous difficulty. Our good young husband and wife who exhibit this curious confusion of thought and incapacity for action in the matter are not peculiarly gross and stupid. On the contrary, their incapacity is a highly refined edition of a contradictory element, in fact, an odd strain of personal antagonism which all through history has shown itself in men when they have attempted the pursuit of God.

The whole history of religion is the history of endeavours to deal with this obstacle to the quest, which to the ruder man has been a blind terror, and to the finer

man a tender and piercing distress—a blind terror which stuffed a wicker idol with living men and burned them in the hope of clearing the road; a tender and pathetic distress which broke out in the lamentable cry, "O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee; my flesh also longeth after Thee in a barren and dry land where no water is."

And in the course of history this has become clear—the obstacle lies in the circumstances of life and also in human nature itself. And the pursuit involves not only a selection among the things around us and a separation from some of them, but also a selection among the impulses of our nature and the destruction of those that fight against the quest.

Gentlemen on the hearthrug, before we go any further, notice that I am not talking theological theory. I am drawing your attention to the most remarkable phenomenon in history, a phenomenon which you must take note of if we are to get any further in this business.

Now, there was centuries ago a nation which understood this better than any other nation—the Jewish nation. We have its history from this point of view in the big collection of documents we call the Old Testament. These documents represent a great many centuries of national and literary history. Each bears the stamp of the period in which it was produced, and we have to adjust our ideas to the ideas of each period, if we are to understand exactly what its author means. But in the history of religion the whole thing has an everlasting value. Taken together, it is the story of a whole nation which accepted the spiritual interpretation of the universe and made the quest of God its first business. On this subject it remains the classic.

What does it show? It begins by showing us a man who separated himself and his family from their surroundings and embraced a life of self-sacrifice in the pursuit of God. It begins by showing us a father and mother to whom God was sun and air and bread and butter, and who consequently produced and trained a son who had the root of the whole thing in him—Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac. It insists that a God-fearing nation is a nation composed of such families, and it shows us the most gallant attempt at such a nation that the world has ever seen. There it was, enthroned on its high oblong plateau, as on an altar of stone, an object to be gazed up at from the caravan route between the two great world powers of Syria and Egypt; to the east the desert, and to the west the harbourless sea.

And, now, Sunday after Sunday, the prophet Isaiah is reminding us of the sacrifice it was set there to offer—the sacrifice of refusing advantageous alliances with men when they were seen to be in opposition to the pursuit of God.

And the result? The result was the sifting out of a few thousand souls of a particular type of mind, and for the rest almost incredible disaster. It was indeed as costly a process as the extraction of radium, but the radium was extracted—souls all aglow for the Divine adventure and brought to a point of the road where they saw they were bidden to wait; while scattered across the world in secret unconscious sympathy lay the men from whose minds the glamour of the Empire was fading, and who had come to see that this most wonderful unity of worldly well-being was only after all the biggest idol that men had ever made. Then suddenly there rang out "the Gospel."

Suddenly there appeared in the world New Men, extra-

ordinary, radiant, shining, triumphant. Shouting, shouting, shouting, "The way is clear, the Power is come, we have got it. It is ours."

"Why, what has happened? Why do you look and speak thus? What are these things that you do? Why don't you mind pain, and sorrow, and death like other men? Explain yourselves. Explain what we see you are and what we see you do."

"What has happened? *Something as big as creation.* Jesus who lived with us and was dead lives again, lives for ever, lives within us, and is the Power you see and feel in us. It is not we who are what you see. It is not we who do what we do. It is Christ within us."

"But, men, what you say is very strange. Some have shown me a law which I must obey, and others have pointed out some direction towards which I must worship. But you come embodying it. You claim to have it in your very flesh and in your blood. Here, let me take your hands. Yes! a thrill goes through me. Let me look into your eyes! Yes, that certainty and triumph convince. O! tell me what I must do. I want God. I am weary of sin. I have tried so many ways. I have got so short a way. Take me in among yourselves; share with me what you have."

"Jesus, you call him. Who is Jesus? Where did he live? What! Nazareth! Impossible! How did he die? Crucified! Absurd! No! I retract! I can take even that from you. Ah! forgive me; you have turned the world upside down for me. Forgive me, and take me—yes, pour the water upon me. No, stay. I dare not. Listen! I have been a thief. I have been a fornicator. I have been an adulterer. I have hated, I have defamed, I have oppressed. Depart from me.

"But you are smiling. You are looking lovingly at me. Oh! how can you put your arms round me, knowing what I am? Then receive me, and do with me what you will. The water; ah, thank God for it! And the pressure of those hands upon my head! Fire courses through me. But who is this whom I now see for the first time, standing in the midst, the One with the wounds? Jesus! my God!"

Sir, before you came into the smoking-room you went very quietly into John's nursery, where he was sleeping in his cot. By some strange instinct he seemed to know you were coming, for, as you bent over him, he opened two grave eyes upon you like two flowers opening to the sun. He was too sleepy to speak, he was too sleepy to smile, but he put out two very warm, soft arms and folded them round your neck, and as you kissed him he gave one long deep sigh of peace and sank back into dreamland.

It was only a moment, but in that moment you, a man, were caught up to the throne of God. In that moment you reigned in the heart of the universe, king and priest.

Now you want to make John a Christian. If so, you must bring him to Jesus as to the Ultimate Force, for this is Christianity. Christianity is the knowledge that Jesus is All, that there is nothing further anywhere. And Jesus reigns in this mystic circle of transfigured men. He can only be seen by eyes opened through participation in the life which has transfigured them.

And if you would bring John—well, you must bring him yourself, and you cannot do that as long as you stand on the hearthrug with your mouth open. You must get out of that circle of men in dress clothes. You must go upstairs and take John, warm and rosy,

out of his cot, and wrap him in a blanket and bring him down into the smoking-room, and before all these fellows —yes, I am very sorry to have to say it to you—before all these fellows you must kneel at the feet of that Figure with your baby in your arms.

Such Christianity was in the beginning; such it is now; such it ever will be. It is the knowledge that while there are many ways by which the spirit of man can commune with the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God has opened the perfect way in Jesus, in whom the Spirit of God and the spirit of man are indissolubly united in a Person, Who is God.

The detail of the way we have agreed to lock up in a cupboard until next Sunday. We locked it up because the gentlemen in the dress clothes had found its archaisms and difficulties quite insupportable. Of course it has archaisms. It wouldn't be historic if it had no archaisms. Of course it has difficulties. It would not be true if it had no difficulties. We will consider the way and the difficulties next Sunday.

Meanwhile I have a last word to say to the young couple. Christianity is the experience of Jesus in the sphere where He manifested Himself on Whitsun Day, and ever since has manifested Himself—His Church. And so you cannot have the full experience until you unite yourself to the life of the faithful. It comes in the life of the faithful. You can see it all beginning to happen if you choose to read the Epistles of St. Paul. But you have had the misfortune to hear the Epistles of St. Paul read to you in church until the very name of them bores you. You say you can't make head or tail of them. Have you ever tried? You are very fond of picture puzzles. I often see a half-finished one on a table in

your house. If you had spent as much ingenuity and patience over the first Epistle to the Corinthians, the mists would have cleared, and you would have seen the wonderful thing beginning to happen, the first appearance of the radiant society of transformed men in that corrupt university city of long ago.

But you will never find salvation in the Church of Corinth. It awaits you in the Church of London, and nowhere else. It is in the Church of London, and nowhere else, that you, an inhabitant of London, must get your experience of Jesus.

The explanation of a great deal of the present situation lies in the fact that for many years we have been taught to find our experience of Jesus in the pages of the Gospels and not in the life of the Church. There has been an attempt on the part of those who found the way of the Church laborious to escape from it into the Gospels. Now it is very important to explain to people to-day that the Gospels are not an independent biography of Jesus. The Gospels are the work of the men of Power who embodied the life which transformed the world. They are such a selection from the sayings and doings of our Lord as shall best illustrate His intercourse in His risen life with His children in His Church.

No! one cannot escape from the Church into the Gospels, which the Church shaped and gave to her members in order that they might understand better what they were already experiencing within her circle. The Bible is not the way; it is the time-table which shows us when and where the train starts. If you want to go to Glastonbury, you will do well to consult a time-table of the London and South-Western Railway; but having done so, you do not do well to sit down on the

open page and say, "Here I go to Glastonbury." That is not the way the time-table conducts you to Glastonbury. It points you to two parallel lines of metal and a coach which runs along them, and if you get into the coach at the scheduled time there is every hope that you will reach the shrine.

The Bible is the time-table in which the company of transformed men tells us the time, the way, the place, the plan. The fact is that our Bible teaching bores our children, because we have not used it to put them into the train. We have been reading them the time-table when they wanted change of air.

Yes, that is what our young husband and wife must give their children—change of air. They must transplant their home into the agelong atmosphere of the Catholic Church. They must create one more sweet Catholic home within these provinces of Canterbury and York. And when they have done that, then their little child will lead them.

It is a big Bavarian village church. I am in a corner, but for the rest the broad nave is empty. Why does the west door tremble and move in that odd fashion? Surely no draught can shake it in that manner, it is too heavy. Something is trying to get in. A dog? No! it is Wilhelm, John's Bavarian cousin, aged five. There is an awful moment when it appears that the big door is going to crush him, but he eludes it skilfully, and patters cheerfully up the nave in his tiny hobnailed shoes; Wilhelm of the bare legs and knees and short knickerbockers, the magnificent braces strapped over the white shirt, and the brave hat with the eagle's feather. He is all alone. He is five years old. But he is full of business. Up to the top he goes and is engulfed and lost to view

in an immense pew. The church is big and empty; it is full of twilight shadows; great white figures of the saints look down from the altar-pieces. Amid this awful silence Wilhelm prays. He is not in the least alarmed, for above him in the gloom of the chancel a friendly star is twinkling, and the star is saying in language which Wilhelm understands, "Jesus is here."

V. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CATHOLIC RELIGION

"I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints."—APOSTLES' CREED.

LAST Sunday we were in a smoking-room. Our Lord was standing in the centre. At some distance on the hearthrug stood a party of English gentlemen in evening dress, silent and rigid.

One of their number had separated himself from them and was kneeling at the feet of Jesus holding a sleeping baby in the arm the Boer War had spared. It was an embarrassing and uncomfortable situation.

To-day it is still the smoking-room, but it is the next morning. Everything has resumed an ordinary air. The young husband who had offered his gold and frankincense last night wants to talk to me. In a grave and constrained way he has filled a pipe while the silence is broken by shouts of laughter from the lawn. John, who has tumbled over while playing with his fox-terrier, is lying on his back on the grass laughing helplessly, and the fox-terrier is standing over him and trying to look like a man-eating lion.

At last John's father begins, "Well, I saw the thing last night, the whole thing, and of course it has changed everything. It is absurd to say I am going on with it. There is nothing else for me to do. Now, I want to know the way, because, of course, what I have called my religion up to this won't do. I will tell you about it.

When I was a boy I used to say my prayers. I gave them up more or less when I left school. I took to them again when I met my wife. They have not been much good. It has just depended upon how much I have cared for the thing I prayed for. My prayers for my wife and John are all right, and when John nearly died of croup I did pray, and I am quite sure it was answered. I have always been sure of that. But that is about all. I go to church here, but I cannot pretend I care about it, and the odd thing is, I don't see how I can care any more about it now. It does not seem somehow to have much to do with what I discovered last night.

"Well, then, about the Holy Communion. Of course I didn't go for a good many years, but when I got back from the war, and my wife and I got engaged, we went to communion together, and when we have been down here together we have gone always about once a month. I have never been by myself. I should not have felt quite comfortable to go by myself. But after last night I feel I cannot go again until I am a better sort of man. I always used to say I could not go if I thought it was what the Roman Catholics think it is. Of course I do not know anything about—what's the word?—thank you —Transubstantiation. But, if you can understand what I mean, now I see it is, well—well, you know, it is—it's practically what they say it is; and I can't go.

"Look here, I have brought you into the smoking-room to have this out. Now, the fact is, before I met my wife I did not lead a straight——"

"Stop. I beg your pardon, may I say something to you before you go on? These are not the difficulties you mentioned last night. I have had those difficulties

under lock and key ever since. Here is the first, 'The Creation stories of Genesis.'"

My friend's tone becomes a little irritable and impatient. "I don't see that that has got much to do with what we are talking about this morning. The Creation stories of Genesis. Oh! I suppose they are a way of putting some things we ought to know about God being One, and about men being free, and about their having made a bad choice—things of that sort. Is not that it?

"Yes, I think it is. Difficulty number one goes into the waste-paper basket. And here are three which your new experience has answered offhand. The variety of religions ceases to be a difficulty, now that you have experienced the new life in Jesus Christ. The failures of Christians—they do not now stand in the way of your being one yourself. It is your own personal failure to correspond with what you have experienced which now absorbs you. And you have now seen and understand for ever the possibilities of intercessory prayer. Those three difficulties can be dismissed, and I fancy this fourth can go with them—mistakes in the Bible.

"Before yesterday, when you got your first Christian experience, you used to demand that there should be no human element in the Bible. You did so, I think, because you had heard it called what it does not call itself—the Word of God. Now you have seen and, as it were, felt and handled Him whom the Bible calls the Word of God. So now you know that the Bible is true—true for the purpose for which it is grouped together, because it plainly speaks of Him. Its Divine inspiration and its human features you can study at your leisure. For the first time, too, you are

able to appreciate the Christian view of its wonderful contents—for example, the miracles of the Old Testament. No doubt some are poetry rather than prose. The rest are mainly incidents in the lives of the great prophets, and you are now ready to notice three facts about them. First, that these spiritual men made such a big splash that the spray of it reaches us in the form of these stories across these several thousand years. Secondly, even if it be true that a *Daily Mail* reporter would have given us a more commonplace narrative, that it would have conveyed to us less and not more of the truth about the prophet's spiritual force than we gain from these vivid stories. But that, thirdly, looking back now from the point of view of your new experience, the occurrence of unusual events in the straight line of preparation gets a new probability.

"Two difficulties remain—first, the Athanasian Creed, its definitions and its warnings. What do you think about the Athanasian Creed this morning?"

"Well, I dislike the Athanasian Creed as much as ever. But, again, I must remind you, these things are now only difficulties which surround my experience. They used to be hindrances to my holding the Christian theory of things, but now my religion is not a theory, and they cannot touch my experience."

"Yes, and that means that you have experienced the truth which the statements of the Athanasian Creed are framed to guard. The Athanasian Creed says in the language of the sixth century what our Lord said and implied in His every word and deed—that He is the Alpha and the Omega, that Christianity is final, that there is no alternative; and I think I can put the force of its warnings to you in a way you will understand.

Last night you knelt at the feet of Jesus with John in your arms. Those other men on the hearthrug did not budge an inch. Now the Athanasian Creed does not say that they are damned if they do not move, but it does say that you would have been damned if you had not moved, and that you will be damned if you cast away what you have now got. You see, you were ready, and therefore responsible, and perhaps those men were not. And if the Men of Power really must preach Jesus as the ultimate force, then they had better do so in words which bite in.

"Yes, you are quite right in saying that such a conversion or turning round as you have experienced dissipates most of the difficulties which I had locked up in the cupboard, but one remains, and one about which you must take a practical line—the divisions among Christians. You have been turned round, but you have still got all the way before you, and your difficulty is that there seems to be more than one way.

"I know, and the difficulty has cropped up already. You see, we have never had family prayers. I want to start them now, and I have been talking to my wife this morning about the religion of the servants. The butler and his family, who live at the lodge, are Roman Catholics. They all tramp over to Stoke Cotterell to the Hampton Lacy's private chapel for Mass, wet or fine, Sunday after Sunday. It has been rather a nuisance, but the man is such a capital servant I have put up with it. Then my wife says that the cook is a strict Methodist and a most excellent woman. She goes to the chapel in the village. And one of the housemaids belongs, I am told, to a big Low church in London. She is a very good girl, and so religious, that although she belongs to the Church she

prefers to go to the chapel. All the other servants say they belong to the Church of England, but my wife says they don't seem to have any religion at all, except Robert, the second footman. He is a very nice boy and always looks so cheerful. He sings in the choir, and is tremendously keen. My wife says that he was brought up at St. Alban's, Holborn, and that he belongs to Father Stanton. I don't know what 'belonging to Father Stanton' means, but my wife seemed to imply that it explained Robert."

"Well, yes, if one looks at it superficially, that is all very confounding and perplexing, but it is not really so perplexing as it seems. Your way is straight before you. You must live the life of an English Catholic Christian. Ever since the New Life appeared within the circle of the Men of Power, men have continued to receive it by being drawn within that circle, and the religion they have found themselves practising has never varied in its essential character. It is called the Catholic religion. It is easy to recognise it. There is nothing at all like it, there is nothing in the world so passionately loved; there is nothing in the world so bitterly hated. Its typical product is unique. The Catholic saint is the product of the Catholic religion. There are many good and holy men outside the Catholic religion, but there are no Catholic saints outside the Catholic religion. The communities which have been formed in opposition to the Church have produced noble men and heroes, but they have never produced a Catholic saint.

"It is not difficult to describe the Catholic religion. It circles round an altar which is both on earth and in heaven, and where time is not. It is always Bethlehem

there; it is always Calvary; it is always the garden by the Cross. And around it the men of power are ever standing. They do not pass away. The new generation but adds another outer circle to the throng. About this central point the Catholic Christian worships, and prays, and works, and eats, and rests, and sleeps, and plays. Death does not sever him from it. It only moves him from one group to another and brings him nearer. Death forms no barrier between the groups. The one communion and fellowship of worship and reciprocal prayer radiates from the Centre and pervades the whole.

"Now I am afraid as I paint that picture your thoughts go, not to your dull parish church, but to the private chapel at Stoke Cotterell. I remember your telling me once how you were staying there for some hunting, and that, one morning as you came down to breakfast, you looked into the chapel and found your host kneeling all alone in his pink—he was going out hunting. He didn't see you. You said he was staring at something. You thought it was the altar, and you slipped away undiscovered.

"Yes, but although you have never found that life in your parish church, Robert, the second footman, has. That life has always needed for its maintenance the circle of the men of power, which we call the Apostolical Succession. But, lamentable as separation from the See of Rome is, that separation has never destroyed it. The Catholic life is lived as fully and completely in Asia Minor as in France, in Greece as in Spain, in Russia as in Italy; and the greatest religious phenomenon of the last seventy years has been its reappearance in all its blessedness and glory in the Church of England.

"And if you ask me how it comes that the Catholic

life is greater in power and glory than any other, I answer, because the life of Christ is now extended as it were in the life of His Society. And we only get the whole of Him, if every clause of the Catholic Creed and every sacrament of the Catholic Church is making its full contribution to our life.

"So, since throughout the years of the deadness and degradation of the Church of England the historic age-long fabric remained, it only needed a fresh grasp of every clause of the Creed, and recourse once more to every sacrament of the Church, to recover the light and warmth and glory.

"Forgive me, it is many minutes ago since you did me the honour of proposing to tell me the grave and sad reasons which now seem to debar you from communicating at the Catholic altar, the heart of the Divine life in heaven and on earth. You shall tell me that next Sunday, and then I am going to suggest to you the way by which your parish church may gradually, dull as it is, become to you what it is to your second footman.

"Let me end with a caution: this is a practical matter. The Catholic religion is as practical a matter as building a house or cooking a pudding. You have been converted. You have been turned round. Now the rest is a steady, plodding, monotonous grind, working when you want to stop, following when you want to rest. If you are going on you have much to amend. You delightful young people have no business to be in this plight at all. You have never thought. You have never inquired. You have never studied. You have starved in the midst of plenty. All the great Christian books have been re-edited for you; you have never read one. You have been within reach of all the greatest preachers. You have

never gone to hear them. In London you have been within a stone's throw of worship which expresses the devotion of the whole Church; you have never joined in it, or inquired about it.

"Let me warn you that if you are not prepared to let this cost you a good deal, I cannot take you a step further. You will lose friends; your interests will change; certain pleasant things will lose their savour, and you must leave some of your present characteristics behind. Your objective will no longer be this present life; it will be the life to come."

Once for many years I visited a girl dying of consumption. I will call her Margaret, and she remains to me a symbol of the true character of the Catholic life. Margaret's awful illness robbed her of any pleasure in her religion. Her days were perpetually overclouded by an overwhelming weariness and feeling of irritability; but with magnificent grit she persevered. She never gave in. Her confessions, her communions, her meditations, her prayers, they all went on continuously. She died quite suddenly. They had moved her into a country cottage, when one Saturday afternoon the message came: Margaret is dying and wants the sacraments. I can never forget the scene I saw when I entered the room. Margaret was dressed and lying on a couch in an oriel lattice window, the whole of which was flung open to the roses and the sunshine. It was a gorgeous summer afternoon, and all the turf round the cottage was covered with boys in flannels playing cricket. It was like giving the last sacraments at Lord's in the middle of the Eton and Harrow match. The click of the balls and the shrill joy of the children filled the air. Never did life and death meet more dramatically. I bent over Margaret.

She opened her eyes and smiled. All the weariness was gone. "It has come at last," she whispered, "first my confession." I put my ear to her lips and shut my eyes against the cricket until the hoarse broken whisper was ended and she had been made white in the Blood of the Lamb. "I am so glad," she said, and I saw the joy was coming back. Then she received her communion, and, strangely enough, there was a moment's shadow. "I could not taste," she whispered. "You have received our Lord," I said. She thought a minute and said, "Yes," and then looked happy again.

Then there was a long silence, broken at intervals by the prayers for the dying, and Margaret's soul sank deep down under the dark waters. At last I paused, and hesitated, and rose, and looked at the still, white figure, and wondered if it still breathed. The moment had come for that tremendous prayer with which the Church on earth dismisses her child into the Church beyond. The great prayer was said, and then a hand moved, and very slowly and brokenly it traced a sign upon the breast. And I stood in the summer sunshine amid the shouts of the boys in white, while out of the deepest depths of death there came a sign—the sign of the Cross.

VI. HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

"The forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."—APOSTLES' CREED.

WE have reached the last chapter of our serial story. The young husband who says he has now seen the truth and power of Christ has told me what he brought me into the smoking-room to hear.

"You see," he concludes, "I am not the man to help in this matter of making the Christian religion more effective in English society. You must get my cousin back from the Oxford Mission to Calcutta to do that. I don't suppose he has ever had a bad thought in his life. Thank God, I have been another man since I got engaged to my wife, but there is no getting over the fact that I have disqualified myself for anything more than trying to be a good husband and father in the light of this new knowledge that Christ is all, and I pray God that John may never know the bitterness of such a sin as mine."

I am silent for a minute or two, for a human soul has unveiled itself before me in all its greatness and its weakness. I watch John and the fox-terrier out on the lawn. I say a *Veni Creator*, and then I have my try.

"I know you want me to say what I think; so I will. And on your part, I want you to try to give a real assent, moral and intellectual, to whatever you clearly see to be true in the things I say.

"My first point is this. You cannot hold back from

the service of the Church because you are a penitent sinner. All saints are sinners who have accepted Christ and persevered. They have all begun where you are now. St. Peter in the boat, and you in the smoking-room, begin with the conviction of sin and the genuine cry, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' But our Lord's answer is always a cheery one, 'Don't be afraid; now at last you can make a beginning.'

"Now I know what your rejoinder is. You say, 'That is exactly what I cannot do. If I had never had any relations with Jesus Christ until now, I should do just what St. Paul's converts did when he illuminated their consciences, snapped their sinful ties, and brought them to the threshold of the Church. I should put myself into the Church's hands and do what I was told to do. But I am a man who has been a member of the Church since within a month of his birth, and the relationship has been a failure. I was baptized without knowing it; I was confirmed and not affected by it. My communions have been well meant, but they have been ignorant and uncomfortable acts.'

"Yes, your hesitation is due to that sort of tangle of reasons; but it is not difficult to get the tangle undone. You honestly think that the mortal sin you fell into earlier in life permanently disqualifies you from the militant service of Christ. In thinking that you are something you have never heard of, you are a Novatianist, and the Church decided against your position in the third century. You are right in thinking that mortal sin is an absolute impediment to Church fellowship; but the Church insists that she can remove the impediment. I do not think you would find any difficulty in believing that if you had ever had any real experience of the Church,

but the fact is that the Church, as you have known her, has never made any impression on you. You cannot conceive of her as a body to whom you vitally belong, to whom you owe it to give an account of yourself, and who, when she has judged your case, has the power of removing this impediment to fellowship with her which has arisen in your life.

"You are like Mr. Cecil Rhodes. You feel that the Church of England does not interest you. And that is not to be wondered at, since both you and he were taught to think of the Church of England merely as the Sunday department of the English Civil Service. She is not that. She is for you the age-long Church of Christ, and if you turn to her as such you will find her to be your mother.

"Now here comes another difficulty. You shrink from doing that. You shrink from giving this beautiful spiritual experience of yours a purely practical sequel—a sequel of letters, appointments, interviews, statements, acts. Why should you not keep it, you ask, a beautiful vision for the consolation of yourself, your wife, and John? Because, my friend, you cannot. The vision will not stay. Our Lord will never again appear to you in a smoking-room. For redemptive purposes Christ's life is extended in His Mystical Body. He has found you in the smoking-room. He is now waiting to receive you when you return His visit, and you must find Him where He is waiting. He is waiting in His Church. And if you ask her where you will find Him, she gives you her age-long answer, in that act of candour with His society, and of fresh resolve which removes the impediment of mortal sin. The form of this act has varied in different ages of the Church, but its essence is contained

in the moral requirements of the situation, and never varies. Nobody came to St. Paul with reservations. The lists of sins which he gives as the result of his personal knowledge of his people shows that their candour must have caused his converts a good deal in the way of humiliation. This confidence which you have given to me has been impelled by a natural impulse, and it cannot take the place of the confidence you owe to the Church. You owe her the reparation of candour. If she judge you a true man, she will bless you with His forgiveness whose body she is, and restore to you the shoes, the robe, and the ring.

"Confession is candour with the Church. True, in the present discipline the confidence of the penitent passes into the mind of the Church through the agency of a single minister and is withheld from the comment of individuals; but its essence is candour, and every man who has been candid with the Church knows it to have been the purest, strongest, noblest act of his life. Nothing can be plainer than the direction which the Prayer Book gives you about this. Read the office for the Visitation of the Sick. Do you mean to tell me that what applies to a sick man does not apply to a man in your present distress, or that if you refuse to come to grips with the Church about this now, you are likely to do so when weakened by sickness?

"Read the Ash Wednesday Service. Notice that the English Church speaks of the Prayer Book system of discipline as provisional until a stricter can be established. It is not true, as the Bishop of Birmingham has said, that the failure to restore public discipline in three hundred years adds force to all that is said in the Prayer Book about private discipline?

"Read the Exhortation to Communion. Notice, that if the rubric ordering its recital were obeyed, every Sunday of your life you would hear from the altar an injunction warning you that if you feel yourself to be debarred from communion you must seek absolution. Read the formula used in the ordination of priests in the English Church. It suggests a functionary very unlike your conception of your rector, that excellent citizen, with his boys at a public school, whose sermons and whose conversation bore you.

"No, you have never seen the English Church in her true character. Go in sorrow to her knees and you will find the age-long Church of Christ waiting for you, waiting to be your mother. And for the first time you will understand the Christian unity, when some faithful priest exercises his office towards you, and fulfils his Master's injunction, 'Tend My sheep.'

"Now, let us suppose that you have done that and you are back here again. You have flung yourself back in your chair and laughed long and low, 'I did not think it could possibly make such a difference'; and with a funny look of amused keenness in your face you have said, 'And now, what next!' Next you must have a spiritual adviser and never roam in this chartless and pilotless fashion again. You have a doctor, you have a lawyer; why not a priest? And you must join a Christian community, where, within a circumscribed area, the whole Catholic life is being lived. As things now are in England, you will not get your inspiration out of your country parish. You will only do your duty in your country parish intelligently, if you are attached to a Christian community in one of the big cities.

"You expect me to exercise my priesthood in some

definite circle. And I expect you to exercise your priesthood in some definite circle. A layman is a member of the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ. Join the London congregation which circumstances suggest to you—St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, St. Barnabas', Pimlico, St. Mary Magdalene's, Munster Square, whatever it may be. You will find a community one with the Christian communities of every age and at its heart our Lord ever living in sacramental mystery.

"Make the Sacrifice and the Sacrament of the Altar the centre of your activity and the source of your life. You have a great deal to learn, almost everything about the age-long doctrine of the Church. You have even to learn how to perform the characteristic act of the creature towards God. Your characteristic act as a creature is neither petition, nor acquisition, nor thanksgiving—those are all secondary. It is worship. You have never learnt to worship. You have half unknowingly thought the worship of God to be idolatry. But you will learn to worship as you improve in what must be your first concern, your prayer. You must really begin your prayer as completely as if you had never tried to pray in your life. Begin it by simply putting yourself and holding yourself in the presence of God, being much more careful about strong intent and recollection than anxious about the words you say; praying as largely as possible, and not from your own standpoint, but as far as you can discern it from the standpoint of God; caring now principally, not that John should be spared croup, but that John should grow great in his Lord's service, and fill the place in the universal plan he is designed to fill.

"And if you would learn to pray, you must fence

off a bit of time for it. You must keep a bit of time clear every day for thought and prayer. I remember an undergraduate who had volunteered for the war, saying when he came back, 'I learned to pray out in South Africa. You see,' he said, 'I was on sentry-go a good deal at night, alone in the dark, with nothing to do but keep a lookout, and think. And the stars looked so wonderful out there. You have no idea what the stars look like when you see them from the veldt.' A very great deal of modern failure in religion simply arises from the fact that the whole relationship with God gets crowded out. Now you have to begin to find room for it. And you would do well to fence about a bit of space for it. You have a big house with rooms for many purposes. You should have a room for prayer—a prayer room, with its altar and pictures, and its statues of Our Lady and the Saints. You must make it beautiful. You must gather your family and household there. I know some of these houses, and there is no doubt whatever of the priceless value to the family and the household of this symbol—the little holy place in the heart of the dwelling-house.

"And remember, your religion is the religion of the Cross. No man in the world escapes the Cross. But the religion of the Cross deprives it of its terror by encountering it, and voluntarily clasping it, and carrying it. This can never be a religion which costs you nothing, and you must not evade its discipline. All the rules of the Church about fasting and abstinence are embodied in the Prayer Book. You must obey both in letter and in spirit.

"The early rising, the fast before communion, the observance of the Friday abstinence, the control of the

engagement list by the ecclesiastical kalendar, the strong endurance of bodily, mental, and spiritual fatigue in the service of the Church and of men—these are the things which make a strong Catholic, one who honours the authority which is really laying a restraining and chastening hand upon his impulses and desires.

"You must find time and space. You must give effort, and you must give money. Money is power, and coming to us, as it so often does in the modern world, detached from the sources of its production, we have strangely lost a true sense of responsibility for its possession. We hold this power, with all the rest of our power, a sacred trust for God, and it must be expended in His sight, and a due proportion must be offered to His service.

"But living this life, my friend, you and your wife and John will never die. As years go on the physical and natural ties between you will become spiritual and supernatural ones—ties, not of time, but of eternity. As the body grows weaker, as the eye grows dim, as the strength fails, that spiritual body which you are receiving from the Second Adam in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar will grow stronger and nobler, and the life you live together here will be already the life everlasting."

Brethren, such is the Christian life, and English society to-day is very far from living it. But this is a hopeful moment. Our young husband and wife are really yearning for the Christian life for themselves and for John. But they do not know where to turn or how to begin. Now we must help them. Will you please consider the points I have put before you on these six Sunday mornings very seriously? Some weeks ago, Father Neville Figgis, of the Community of the Re-

surrection, gave two addresses on Religion and English Society at a small gathering of people in London. They have been published by Longmans, and can now be obtained through any booksellers. I need not say that they are very weighty, very important utterances. I beg you to get them at once and to read them carefully.

Then I should like to suggest that you form small groups in your own houses for the discussion of these topics. I believe that the gathering together of small groups of friends—perhaps between tea and dinner—with the definite object of discussing the application of religion to English social life might have very far-reaching results indeed. Like Inkermann, this must be a soldiers' battle. We want more speech and action from the laity in this matter. Among the clergy we want more active Regulars. We want more Religious in the Church of England. Very greatly, indeed, do we need another body of regular priests in West London, men who are pledged to a life of complete self-renunciation, and detached from parochial and family ties. And we need a further ministry of women, women to whom young wives can turn for the help they so often need, women who can point the way to their less experienced sisters by directing them to books or to personal help.

Lastly, and above all, we need contemplatives. We need both the power and the spectacle of men and women who have given themselves entirely to the life of prayer and self-immolation. I do not believe that much will ever be done by the English Church until there is within her a greater power of prayer and self-sacrifice. It needed the martyrdom of St. Lawrence and St. Agnes to convert Roman society. Roman society was converted by the deaths of that splendid youth and that beautiful child,

and it needs a faith, a zeal, and a self-sacrifice as great to startle our modern world into remembering that time is flying, that the world is growing old, and that the last things are at hand—Death and Judgment, Hell and Heaven.

THE END

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